July - August 1984

Letter from Taizé

Give what God gives to you
Meditating on the Word
Scandinavian lights
News : Ethiopia, East Germany, Switzerland, Australia...

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The next European meetings

Cologne : December 28, 1984 - January 1, 1985

In Cologne and in the surrounding re-on, work has begun in order to welcome oung people at the end of the year from all er Europe and to let them share something the life of the Church in Germany.

To prepare in the best way possible for going to Cologne, it would be good if as many of the participants as possible would spend one or two weeks in Taizé during the summer at the European Meetings there this summer.

THE NEXT EUROPEAN MEETINGS IN TAIZÉ

The European Meetings which take place in Taizé, ch week from June to September are set up according the age of the participants. They are always centred the common prayer, morning, midday and evening. order to go to the sources of faith, the meetings have en guided, since the beginning of this year, by the etter from Haiti".

ie foundations of life

Each Monday and Tuesday are devoted to exploring foundations of life : "Live turned towards Christ, not vards yourself" (Letter from Haiti).

On what is my life centred ? What helps me to ntre it on Christ ? In the Gospel, Zachaeus can be taken as an example (Luke 19. 1-10). He turns towards Christ without yet knowing him. He doesn't let himself be stopped by self-reproach, or by awareness of his unworthiness. Nor does he let himself be hindered by the opinions of others. Turned towards Christ, Zachaeus can go home "with joy" and he lives anew in solidarity with his people, particularly with the poor.

Who is Christ to me ? Just as with Zachaeus, he asks me to welcome him in. He is already turned towards me. He is close to those who know hatred, violence, exclusion... But with Christ beside me, what does that change ? "Even when Christ seems absent, he is close beside you. That is what matters most" (Letter from Haiti). And so it becomes possible to "build even with the hardest events" and to be committed as a "ferment of trust and of peace".

Going to Taizé and going to Cologne...

... to awaken the share of a pastoral gift that God has placed, to a greater or lesser degree, in each person, with the aim of passing on the Gospel once back home ;

... to search for ways of making one's home a place of welcome, of sharing, a place where it is possible to be in silence in God's presence ;

... to live out together a sign of the universality of the Church and, through that, to sense the universality of God's love, which is not for a few but for all people, without exception ;

... to find in God the creative energy for alleviating human suffering throughout the world.

Reflecting on commitment

Wednesday and Thursday are spent reflecting on commitment. The "Commitments from Haiti" contain many suggestions for becoming a ferment of trust and of peace. The following article develops this theme.

When we commit our life, we have little to offer. But the story of the multiplication of the loaves in the Gospels shows that Jesus doesn't want to pass by this "little". He needs it, he takes it and, with it, makes a sign of fulness.

Besides, it is not alone that we commit ourselves to following Christ but in communion with others, leaning on others. The aim of the worldwide pilgrimage of reconciliation is to help us to actualize the universalitiy of the Church in our everyday lives. This pilgrimage is lived out with people who are unlike us, different in age, origin, or race. Each generation, with the "little" it has, accomplishes a step of the pilgrimage of the people of God.

With the support of others, it becomes possible to consider concrete commitment and to respond to the question : How can we find in God the creative energy for alleviating human suffering throughout the world ?

One person said : "It is always easy to discuss this question in the groups for the very reason that the young are faced daily with such difficult events. It is not unusual that a deep, and sometimes refreshing discussion arises. But that alone is often not enough. So after a while, we took the question a little differently, suggesting to the young people that they give examples of people who are a living response to the question. Immediately examples came up... : So young English, handicapped and non-handicapped who live and p together, set up craft workshops and had just worked out with government a way to employ eight unemployed persons there. Th had truly found in God the creative energy to alleviate the suffer not only of the mentally handicapped but also of the unemploy Another example : Some young Irish who pray each night in th town's cathedral have decided to go and live in the homes of people who would otherwise have to be hospitalized or put in a cen for the elderly. They too found in their common prayer the creati energies to alleviate the loneliness of the elderly. And then there w the example of some Spanish medical students who meet each we to pray in the hospital chapel, convinced that it will be from pra that they will draw the strength throughout their lives to relieve suffering of their patients".

Celebrating the paschal mystery every wee

Friday and Saturday are special days in Taizé becau of the weekly celebration of the paschal mystery : the is a prayer around the cross Friday evening (often t occasion of a special prayer for a people of the wor passing through a particular trial), and then a celebrati of the resurrection on Saturday evening.

Those who can, spend these two days in silenc Others still reflect together on the Sunday morning Gosp Various themes for reflection are suggested to those wi want to have another opportunity for intense reflecti on commitment in their life : What does responding a call of Christ mean ? Where is my place in the Church In what way can we show solidarity with the very poores

The meetings in Taizé

For young people between 17 and 29 years of age, meetings are held every week throughout the year (arrival Sunday afternoon, departure the following Sunday at midday) and every weekend (from Friday evening to Sunday midday). Register in advance.

For groups, wait to receive a reply which will contain practical information.

Registration to be sent to : MEETINGS, 71250 Taizé-Community, France.

Name :

First Name :

Address :

(with zip-code and country)

Telephone : .....

Occupation : ..... Age : .....

Will participate in the meeting from ..... to .....

Will bring my own tent : yes / no.

I have already been to Taizé : no / yes (date of last visit : .....)

Please send .... additional registration forms.

Young people who can *help with the welcome* sho arrive on the Friday evening before the week th have chosen. Those who want to spend several wee at Taizé should fix the length of their stay by c responding with the welcome.

Costs : Everyone pays according to his or her p sibilities and the value of their home countr currency. Suggested price per day for young Engl and Irish people : 20 - 26 FF. For young American 26 - 32 FF. For adults : 45 - 75 FF. Those coming fr outside of France should change money in advar before departure for Taizé.

Lodging (boys and girls separate) : in tents or dor tories. Bring blankets, sleeping bags and air mattr ses. If possible, bring a tent.

It is useful to bring a *Bible* with you.

Silence and solitude : young people can always spe several days of silence and personal prayer at Tai

Those who are 15 or 16 years old can participate all the weekends of September, and November 1 -

Adults (30 years and older) : because of limited commodations, write in advance and wait for a re

Parents with children form a week-long group discussion and sharing (arrival Monday, depart Sunday at midday), from Pentecost to September

Children and elderly persons : Each week, from H Week until early November, thirty children, com from families marked by separations, can be w comed. From mid-November until Lent, those vancing in age are welcomed for a week. Write advance and wait for a reply.

« COMMIT YOURSELF AS A FERMENT OF TRUST AND PEACE. GIVE WHAT GOD GIVES TO YOU. »

The "commitments from Haiti" (see the *Letter from Taizé*, February) to start with, do not suggest activities to add on to the many tasks in our everday lives. To be a ferment of trust and peace does not mean being torn in different directions ; it means just as much our work-time as the time spent at home or with others. Christ asks us to follow him with our whole being : prayer, work, and service of others are all one.

Commitment takes many forms, depending on the circumstances, but it has always the same source : "I live not with my own life, but it is Christ who lives in me » (Galatians 2. 20). These words of Paul's are not only important for our prayer life, but also for all we do. Christ lives in us through his Spirit, shining through, and working in us, even with our weakness, without us knowing how. This is why radical commitment is not a burden which God imposes on us. He lets us find freedom : the freedom of forgetting self. God's generosity, which fills us abundantly, sets fire to a love which is the giving of one's self.

Loving with compassion of heart

In the Gospel, Jesus meets someone who asks, "What must I do to have eternal life ?" (Luke 10. 25-37). Yet that man knew the answer ; to love God and to love his neighbour as himself. So to justify asking the question he questions further, "But who is my neighbour ?" It is as if he wanted to say : it is not easy to love one's neighbour as that is so general. How do we decide where to commit ourselves ? Nobody can do everything.

Jesus does not want to tell him who his neighbour is. If I were to know exactly who "my neighbour" were, I would calculate a very human measure of what to give. I would be the centre of everything. I could become contented with my actions, saying, "I've done my bit, if only the others would do as much", or even to accuse myself, "I never do enough, there are so many in distress to go and help". Self-judgement can turn us in on ourselves and make us forget that Christ lives in us.

Jesus' answer is surprising, it takes us away from self-centred reflection. He tells a parable : "A man fell among robbers ; they stripped him of all he had, beat him, and made off, leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan traveller who came upon him was moved with compassion when he saw him" (Luke 10. 30-33).

According to the widely-held opinion of the time, there was little chance that Samaritans would have acted in the right manner. They knew about the commandment to love one's neighbour, but they were unaware of the ways indicated to treat the neighbour. In the parable, all the Samaritan saw was the wounded man, and he knew nothing else about him.

Deep compassion, from the heart, awakens care for those who are suffering. It does not shy from action, despite the cost : the Samaritan pays for everything when he brings the wounded man to an innkeeper. He is prepared to go out of his way rather than try to find out who his neighbour is.

Jesus comes back to the question. Not, "Who is my neighbour ?" but, "Which of the three showed himself to be the neighbour to the man who fell among brigands ?" (v. 36). There are people wounded by abandonment, scorn, or injustices everywhere. No one alone can help them all. But we can let ourselves be put out of our way for them, to lose much of what we have to let the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of compassion, kindle in us a fire of love.

In what way do we look at, and listen to those who surround us? How can we work with events that may put us out of our way? How can we live our commitment joyfully ?

The hope in commitment

Anyone who is trying to be attentive to the distress around them, is open to discouragement. "What use is the little I am able to do ?" The scepticism in doubt is paralysing.

In the prophet Isaiah, two texts, among others, point towards hope. In one instance, this hope is depicted as hidden in God who wants the good of all his creation. In another, it is hidden in those who, giving up their own life, want to be no more than servants.

The aspiration for a world habitable for the whole human family is almost universally held. At the same time, disappointment is often large-scale. Isaiah was called to confirm hope : "God will lay down the law for the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares, their spears into pruning hooks. No longer will they raise the sword, and they will learn how to wage war no more" (Isaiah 2. 4). God does not want destruction or catastrophes. War and hate, and the suffering and hunger that they cause, do not come

from him. To be certain of that, is to already see a light piercing the darkness to bring healing to anguish and doubt.

But how can we be confident in that hope when God seems to have forgotten his plan of peace ?

At a difficult point in history, when everything seemed destined for ruin, a prophet was able to listen. God asked him to discern an unexpected hope. God is at work in a hidden way. He works through a person. He speaks to the prophet about a servant who, instead of living his own life, gives himself fully into God's hands. "This is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I find joy. I have put my Spirit upon him" (Isaiah 42. 1). God has not withdrawn himself as one might have been led to believe, but he is coming to carry out his plan of love through his servant. It is in him, a human being, that God puts his hope.

In this servant, the prophet quickens the advent of Christ, the Servant Jesus. But all of us who try to love are servants with him, servants in whom God has put his hope. We remain poor servants ; but God offers us to live from his life, to carry out with Christ his plan for pea on earth. And, in giving his Spirit, he commits hims with everyone who welcomes him.

Even in the heart of bitter experiences, God war to help us to stand firm. About his servant he says : Fait fully he brings true justice, he neither wavers or becom discouraged until he has established true justice on earth (42. 3-4). And this is how this poor servant of God, wh does not even "make his voice heard on the streets" (42. 2 becomes the hope of the "distant islands" (42. 4), the en of the earth.

God says to his servant : "I have made you a lig for the nations" (42. 6). Much commitment and fideli in day to day life are perhaps hardly noticed. It can happe that we begin to doubt their worth. But the life of a po servant is much more than could ever be imagined ; means participating in God's plan which is as vast as th world. God makes us what Christ is first : "I am, but als you are the light of the world" (John 8. 12, Mat 5. 14).

From where can we draw hope when we are faced with th hard events of our time ?
How can we encourage one another to persevere ?

Christ Jesus, on the morning of your resurrection, the women looking for you near your empty tomb didn't recognise you at all. And we too "are going by faith, and not by sight" (2 Cor 5. 7).

Risen Jesus, humble of heart, you force yourself on no-one. You speak to us in silence, as if the fullness of prayer were to stay in your presence.

When we forget you, we go on loving you. Our hearts, our body and soul are like dry land thirsting for you.

In whoever trusts in you, everything is renewed (2 Cor 5. 17). Our past is buried in the heart of God. See, we are people of the present moment, turned towards today.

And so that we may live from you, Christ Jesus, you make us humble people of God. You take us out of isolation by letting us lean not only on our little faith, but also on the faith of your Church, ever since the first believers, since Mary and the apostles, to the Christians of today.

Risen Jesus, without tiring, you persist, "My love for you will never cease, do you love me ?" And our stammering reply, "You know that I love you, maybe not as I would like to, but I love you."

Prayer by Brother Roger,
Easter morning, 1984

Bible Readings : Meditating on the Word

The two following pages present two pos-lities for meditating the Word of God and g to the sources of faith :

A Bible text is suggested for each day reading for the midday prayer in Taizé). s short enough to be memorised or read r several times during the day. The refer-e gives the passage from which the short is taken and which is read in Taizé either he morning or the evening.

An introduction presents several chapters the Bible (read in Taizé during the same od). It may be useful to read these chap-in an edition of the Bible which has ex-natory notes. Above all, don't be hindered what you do not understand on a first ding. Each day, it is enough to find a few ds, even a single word, to linger on and erline. Later the passages that you have erlined will shed light on other more dif-lt ones that you did not grasp at first sight.

For July : The Letter of Paul to the Philippians.

Paul addresses a warm letter to the Christian community in the town of Philippi in Macedonia (modern Greece). He has special affection for them : "I love you all tenderly in the heart of Christ Jesus" (Phil 1. 8).

"Rejoice in the Lord without cease" (4. 4) : throughout this letter, joy emerges as the mark of Christian life.

Paul is writing from prison, where he had been sent for trying to communicate his faith to others. He expresses his conviction that, no matter what, all that happens will contribute towards the greater good (1. 12-26). "I have learnt to make the most of all situations" (4. 11).

In chapter 2, the attitude of Christ, who made himself the lowest by becoming a servant, is proposed to all believers, with the aim of achieving unity and concord among themselves.

In chapter 3, Paul tells about his own progress in life having accepted to lose everything in order to reach Christ.

LY 1984

1 Jesus said : Anyone who finds his life lose it ; he who loses his life for my e will find it. *Matthew 10.37-42*

2 James wrote : God gives to all in plicity, without reproach. *James 1.1-6*

3 Jesus said to Thomas : You believe use you can see me. Blessed are those have not seen and yet believe. *John 20.24-29*

4 James wrote : Blessed the man who ds firm when difficulties come. He will ive the crown of life which the Lord has nised to those who love him. *James 1.9-12*

5 James wrote : When you are tempted, r say : God is tempting me. God cannot tempted to do anything wrong and he ts no one. *James 1.13-17*

Jesus said : I am the light of the d ; anyone who follows me shall not walk he darkness, but will have the light of *John 8.12-16*

7 Jesus said : I do nothing on my own ority, but I say what the Father has ht me. *John 8.26b-30*

8 Jesus prayed : Father, Lord of heaven earth, I praise you for having revealed to iren what you have hidden from the wise the clever. *Matthew 11.25-30*

9 James wrote : Whoever looks stead-nto the word of God, the law of perfect dom, to put it into practice will find hap-ss in what he does. *James 1.22-25*

10 James wrote : God has chosen those are poor in the eyes of the world to be in faith and heirs to the Kingdom he has promised to those who love him. *James 2.1-5*

Wed 11 The Lord says : Look, I bring recovery and healing to my people. I will heal them, I will reveal to them peace and faithfullness in full measure. *Jeremiah 33.2-3,6,8*

Thu 12 James wrote : Blessings and curses should not come from the same mouth. Does a spring pour out fresh and brackish water from the same opening ? *James 3.4-12*

Fri 13 Peacemakers sow the seeds which will bear fruit in justice. *James 3.13-18*

Sat 14 Console my people, console them, says your God, speak to their hearts. *Isaiah 40.1-5*

SUN 15 St. Paul wrote : All creation retains the hope of being freed from its slavery to corruption, in order to enter the glorious freedom of the children of God. *Romans 8.18-23*

Mon 16 James wrote : Do not speak ill of one another. Who are you, to judge your neighbour ? *James 4.4b-8,11,12*

Tue 17 Jesus said : I have come to give life and to give it abundantly. *John 10.7-10*

Wed 18 Why do you say : My destiny is hidden from the Lord, my rights are disregarded by my God ? Do you not know, have you not heard ? The Lord is an everlasting God, the creator of the world. *Isaiah 40.25-28*

Thu 19 Jesus said : I am the good shepherd. I have other sheep whom I must also lead. They too will listen to my voice, so there will be one flock, one shepherd. *John 10.16-21*

Fri 20 The Lord says : Do not be afraid, I am with you ; do not worry, I am your God, your help, your strength, your salvation. *Isaiah 41.8-10*

Sat 21 St. Paul wrote from prison : Nothing will defeat me. I will keep my confidence, now as always ; Christ will be glorified in my body, whether I live or whether I die. *Philippians 1.12-20*

SUN 22 Jesus said in a parable : If you pull up the weeds straight away you are liable to uproot the wheat at the same time. Let them grow together until the harvest comes. *Matthew 13.24-30*

Mon 23 Paul wrote : For me, life is Christ. *Philippians 1.21-26*

Tue 24 Jesus said : Happy the merciful, they shall have mercy shown to them. *Matthew 5.7-12*

Wed 25 Jesus said to his disciples : Anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant. *Matthew 20.20-28*

Thu 26 I will lead my blind people along paths that they don't know, says the Lord ; I will turn the darkness ahead of them into light. *Isaiah 42.10,16*

Fri 27 The Lord says : You are precious in my eyes, I value you and I love you. *Isaiah 43.1-4a*

Sat 28 Jesus says : Give to anyone who asks you. *Matthew 5.38-42*

SUN 29 Jesus said : The kingdom of heaven is like a trader looking for precious pearls ; when he finds one of great value he sells everything he owns and buys it. *Matthew 13.44-46*

Mon 30 Jesus said : Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you. *Mt 5.43-48*

Tue 31 Paul wrote : For Christ I have accepted the loss of everything and I look on all things as trash if only I can reach Christ and be united with his life. *Phil 3.8-9*

Wed 1 Paul wrote : Forgetting what lies behind, I strain toward what is ahead, pressing on towards the goal. *Philippians 3.10-15*

Thu 2 The Lord says : I have blown away your faults like a cloud, and your sins like the morning mist. *Isaiah 44.21-23*

Fri 3 I have learnt to make the best of every situation. I can do all things with the help of Christ who gives me strength. *Phil 4.8-14*

Sat 4 Paul wrote : Rejoice in the Lord always. Let your gentleness be evident to everyone. *Philippians 4.4-7*

SUN 5 Paul wrote : I am certain that neither death nor life, neither the present nor the future, nor anything else in all creation, can ever come between us and the love of God, made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Romans 8.35-39*

Mon 6 TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD
On the mountain, a bright cloud covered Jesus and those who were with him, and a voice from the cloud said : This is my beloved Son, in whom I have placed my joy. Listen to him. *Matthew 17.1-9*

Tue 7 Jesus said : No one can serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and money. *Matthew 6.22-24*

Wed 8 John wrote : This is the message we heard from Christ and that we are announcing to you : God is light ; in him is no darkness at all. *1 John 1.5-7*

Thu 9 Jesus said : Seek first God's kingdom and his justice, and all the other things will be given to you in addition. *Matthew 6.31-34*

Fri 10 Jesus said : Do not judge and you will not be judged. *Matthew 7.1-5*

Sat 11 John wrote : Anyone who loves his brother lives in the light, and need not be afraid of stumbling. *1 John 2.9-10*

SUN 12 During the night Jesus came to his disciples in the boat, walking on the lake. He said : Courage ! It is I. Be not afraid. *Matthew 14.22-33*

Mon 13 Jesus said : Enter by the narrow gate, for the road that leads to life is narrow. *Matthew 7.12-20*

Tue 14 Jesus said : Whoever listens to my words and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on rock. *Matthew 7.21,24-29*

Wed 15 VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER of the LORD
Mary said : My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, who has looked upon his humble servant. *Luke 1.39-56*

Thu 16 God said to his servant : I am making you the light of the nations so that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth. *Isaiah 49.5-7*

Fri 17 John wrote : You know that Christ came to take away sins, and that in him there is no sin. *1 John 3.5,9-11*

Sat 18 Thus says the Lord : Does a woman forget her child at the breast, or fail to cherish the son of her womb ? Even if she forgets, I will never forget you. *Is 49.13-15*

SUN 19 God never revokes his gifts and his call. *Romans 11.29-32*

Mon 20 John wrote : If one of us sees his brother in need and closes his heart to him, how can the love of God be in him ?
1 John 3.13-18

Tue 21 The Lord has given me a disciple's tongue that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Each morning he wakes me to listen, he opens my ear. *Is 50.4-7*

Wed 22 The Lord is coming to my help. Who will condemn me ? *Isaiah 50.8-10*

Thu 23 Jesus said : I have not come to the just, but sinners. *Matthew 9.*

Fri 24 John wrote : No one has ever s God, but if we love one another, God li in us, and his love in us is made compl *1 John 4.1*

Sat 25 This is love : not that we loved but that he loved us and sent his Son to t away our sins. *1 John 4.1*

SUN 26 Jesus said to his disciples : Who you say I am ? Peter answered : You are Christ, the Son of the living God. *Matthew 16.1*

Mon 27 John wrote : God has given us command : Whoever loves God, must love his brother. *1 John 4.1*

Tue 28 At the sight of the crowds, Jesus moved to compassion because they w harassed and dejected, like sheep withou shepherd. *Matthew 9.35-*

Wed 29 Jesus said to his disciples : Fre you have received, freely give. *Mat 10.*

Thu 30 After the anguish which he endu my servant will see the light, says the L and be contented. *Isaiah 53.1*

Fri 31 Paul wrote : Blessed be the God Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has b sed us with every kind of spiritual bless *Ephesians 1*

For August : Chapters 40 to 55 of the prophet Isaiah.

"Console my people, says your God." (Isaiah 40. 1) : a prophet is ca to revive the hope of the people of God at a difficult time, when they w exiled far from the land of Israel, in Babylon (6th century before Jesus Chr

Overcome with doubt and discouragement ("The Lord has abandoned he has forgotten me" 49. 14), the people begin to think that God is hid himself (45. 15). But God remains the same, "everlasting God, creator of ends of the earth" (40. 28). His tenderness is unchanged : "Fear not, I h called you by name, you are mine" (43. 1). "I have loved you with an everlas love, my love will never leave you" (54. 8, 10).

In their state of discouragement, the prophet announces to the people God makes things anew (43. 19). He "blows away sins like the morning m (44. 22). Praise is the response to his forgiveness : "Shout for joy for what Lord has done" (44. 23).

"Exiled in a foreign land", the people said, "I have toiled in vain, hausted myself for nothing" (49. 4). But the exile is not just a purely nega event ; it is a passage. In a hidden way, God is carrying his light to the e of the earth through his "servant" (49. 6). And in chapters 42, 49, 50 and one can already discern characteristics of Christ in this person without maj who is the "servant". The prophet himself, on whom the Spirit of Christ r (1 Peter 1. 11), already shares in the life of this "servant", in the same wa all of the people of God who are suffering.

In chapter 55, he offers a last invitation to seek God, to trust in his w

ANDINAVIAN LIGHTS

Is it possible to make a pilgrimage across nmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland and discover there signs of hope ? It seemed e a challenge ; even those who are such gns of hope, find it hard to believe. Never-eless, they are there, though sometimes dden and discreet. They need confirmation. ien they will know how to bring others ong with them. This is what happened ring a visit to these four countries.

On arrival, amid the Scandinavian winter, one of first impressions was seeing candleholders in all windows, crowned with flickering lights. They are there for Advent, following an ancient custom. One rning at Harnösand, in the north of Sweden, we left house very early to go to the cathedral to pray. The was sliding on the snow. Coming down the hill we ld see the whole valley lit up by these candles. So ny little lights in the darkness of winter ! It was like arable of what we were discovering on our pilgrimage.

Almost all the young people we met had an attitude resignation towards the Church. Some are searching a way to give their whole lives to service of the Gospel they are disappointed by what they see when they k at the Church. The structures of the Church seem set and immobile to them that there is no room left a breath of fresh air.

How is it then, that we would meet, in every town ere we went, little groups, families, people of the urch, bishops, who are visibly bearers of light ? When spoke about them to others, the usual answer was, h yes, but they are exceptions !" Scandinavia, as we for ourselves, is covered with these exceptions.

ey lead a life of sharing

On the outskirts of many Swedish cities, satellite ns have sprung up in recent years. These satellite ns, planned on a uniform model, offer all that is neces- but people do not like living there. Many appart- ts are left un-rented. A significant proportion of the dents are immigrants, living there because they have other choice.

In Göteborg, Sweden, in one of the satellite towns, young couples and some single people have rented bought appartments in neighbouring buildings. Each ning, one of them prepares the meal for the others. e a week they gather for prayer and a Bible discussion. y belong to different churches and each goes to their church on Sundays. They have taken a commitment and above their usual work : helping at the parish th centre, scout groups, etc. Their presence in such ighbourhood is a visible sign that the isolation suffered so many people is not inevitable. With creativity and gination, it is possible to live a life of sharing.

They open wide the doors of the Church

Faced with the hardships of loneliness, unemployment and alcoholism, so widespread in Scandinavia, many Christians are trying to open the doors of the Church in welcome. We often saw a room by church entrances, kept continuously open, where people of the streets can come and find a warm welcome.

In Copenhagen, Denmark, there is a little Baptist parish in a particularly difficult district. On Monday nights they welcome homeless people from all over the town for a simple meal and prayer in the parish house. Young people of the parish have committed themselves to be there each week. They sing and sometimes perform a sketch. Then they sit with the visiors to spend a while with these people who usually know nothing but loneliness.

In Vallby, satellite of Västeras, Sweden, in a local parish hall we met 20 Syrian Orthodox refugees who had fled from persecution in Turkey. They showed us their sacred books, written in Aramaic, the language of Jesus. We went to pray with them in front of the iconostasis. So that they would feel at home, the Lutherans not only lent them the little church where they can celebrate the liturgy, but they also built them an iconostasis copied from an original which they went to see in Turkey. The decisions concerning the life of the parish are made by the Swedes and the Turks together.

They offer their future, their liberty

In a hospital in Oulu, Finland, we met a group of five people who have opted to care for old people close to death. They have given up the chance of other work, perhaps more attractive, to stay at the hospital close to these people, who have nearly no family or friends.

In Oslo, Norway, we visited a small prison for women situated on a hill looking down on a large neighbourhood of the Norwegian capital. One night a week, they gather after the meal for the only time in the week when people from outside are allowed to meet the prisoners. Spending the evening with them, we wondered how was it that there could be joy in a prison. The answer was a woman of the Church of Norway who has given up her own freedom to spend all her days in the prison. She animates a real community life among the prisoners. She was able to build a family life, even a life marked by joy, among these women who find themselves together in this place against their will.

The pilgrimage never ceases

Throughout our pilgrimage, we brought icons of the cross and of the resurrection with us. It was gathered around these icons that we prayed in place after place. As it happened, the icon of the resurrection stayed in Oslo by accident : we forgot it in the early morning rush when we had to take a train at 5.45 am. As we were leaving the country, young people of the town decided to send the icon on pilgrimage. As for the icon of the cross, we left it with young Finns. It continues to be taken from place to place, crossing frontiers as often as possible, enabling contacts between the four Scandinavian lands.

ETHIOPIA

A recent visit to the Christians of Ethiopia revealed the vitality of the Orthodox Church, despite the trials it is currently going through, along with the other churches of the country :

"When the emperor adopted the Christian faith in the fourth century, Ethiopia became one of the very first Christian nations. And faith has remained alive, overcoming the trials which have arisen through the centuries. Cut off from the Christian world by the arrival of Islam in Egypt, the Church of Ethiopia developed, in isolation, her own life, culture and liturgy which have survived up to this day. When the 1974 revolution took place, the Orthodox Church was stripped of her power, with the end of the imperial regime and the imprisonment of her Patriarch. The Church also lost material wealth when the lands which were the principal source of income were nationalised. It was reasonable to wonder what would become of faith and the religious life of the Church in confrontation with Marxism.

A large section of the population lives below what is known as "the absolute poverty line". If the poverty is extreme and visible, the changes following the revolution, which abolished feudalism, are equally obvious. By land-nationalisation, the regime has put an end to the centuries-old exploitation of agricultural workers and tenant-farmers. In the last fifteen years a new awareness of the role the Orthodox Church can play in the situation has seen the light of day — the conviction that to take active part in the struggle of the poor is part of its responsibility. Two concrete initiatives show this commitment : on the one hand, the department for development and co-operation ; on the other, the parish councils. Witnessing to the Gospel in the new Ethiopian society, the department for development and co-operation aims to ensure the participation of the Church in national development. As for the parish councils, they are based on the conviction that the laity must become as responsible as the priests for the life and the mission of the Church. Study centres make it possible for priests of all ages to follow courses with a curriculum embracing both religious themes (biblical study, Church history) and pastoral themes (preaching, organisation of the parish councils, the liturgy) as well as development issues (hygiene and health, agriculture and craft-skills).

It is providential that the Orthodox Church of Ethiopia should have started to reflect on its role in society since 1970, and so before the revolution. This way she was not taken completely unawares. Her priority is, and remains, the deepening of the faith, affirmation of the life of the Church and evangelisation. Meanwhile, it is important that she recognised that work in favour of development was also part of her mission, and that her place is on the side of the poor and the oppressed of society. The trial which the Orthodox Church of Ethiopia is living through, far from weakening it, is renewing it. It is enough for example, to take part in the very popular feast of the Archangel Gabriel to see the joy, above all, that breaks out in the chants, in the liturgical dance, the colours, the music, and the offerings, to be reassured both of the vitality and of the rootedness of the Christian faith in this land".

FRANCE

The secretary general of the "Crusade for the Blind" writes : *"The first edition of the Letter from Taizé printed in Braille was issued at the end of 1983. We began to receive subscriptions immediately. So we are starting a regular issue in Braille, using the main texts and Bible readings from the Letter from Taizé, so that those who cannot see may also have access to it".*

SWITZERLAND

After the Paris meeting, an icon of the cross spent several days in each of the Swiss cantons. Firstly in French-speaking ones : Valais, Fribourg, Vaud, Neuchâtel, and then in German-speaking ones : Bern, Solithurn, Saint Gall, Zurich, Lucerne, Basel, and then in the Italian-speaking region. Young people from Fribourg wrote :

"In our canton, the cross went even to certain places where you would often be tempted to think that God is absent. Thus it was a whole day in a factory, and drew the attention of the Swiss, Italian, Spanish and Turkish workers in the middle of their work. It was also in a college, for in schools too, God comes to visit us. At the university, it was the African students who received the cross. On Saturday evening, during a prayer around the cross, in the middle of everyone else, the children made drawings of what forgiveness and reconciliation meant to them. That week was an impressive time for us. It gave us the chance to see better the loneliness of God on the cross, a God who opens his arms to us in the defencelessness of his love, and who in all his solitude, is waiting for our yes. There is such love on the cross that it is worth the pain in answering to this "I love you", by trying to live in and through this love."

EAST GERMANY

"The icon of the cross is in Dresden for a month. The pilgrimage began with a night of prayer which takes place each year in Dresden with young people of various parishes. Each parish is responsible for one hour. The vigil began at midnight and lasted until 7 am. Several hundred people from all over the city took part. There are several churches, Protestant and Catholic, in Dresden where a prayer which was started during the preparation of the last meeting in 1980, still continues. The prospect of another meeting gives us an opportunity to search together with these parishes how to prepare it, setting out from their actual situation, and then how to continue a pilgrimage of reconciliation afterwards. Such searching together brings us to the realisation of what the Church really is : a place of commu openness, and true freedom."

"Becoming a pilgrim of reconciliati will come up against events which are opposite of trust and peace. I will lear know the problems of those around me. when a burden is shared by several shoul it is easier to carry. That way, difficulties unite people in the sharing of peace and Perhaps in our own personal pilgrimage can only make little steps, but when we aware of a collective responsibility, we replace passivity with small actions. Acce responsibility also means having the trus put God's love at the centre. So it is u us to become active without waiting for ot to start, and to have the imagination to cover what we can do."

AUSTRALIA

"With my wife and my two sons, we prayers in our house each night at 9.30 With the icon of the resurrection in a co of the room, we light an oil lamp and a candles. The four of us sing and we read Scripture passages for the day. When we guests for the evening, we invite them to in our little prayer. It was a sentence in Letter from Haiti *that struck us : "When someone arrives, why not take them firs all to a place set aside for prayer, in a co of the room ?"*

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